

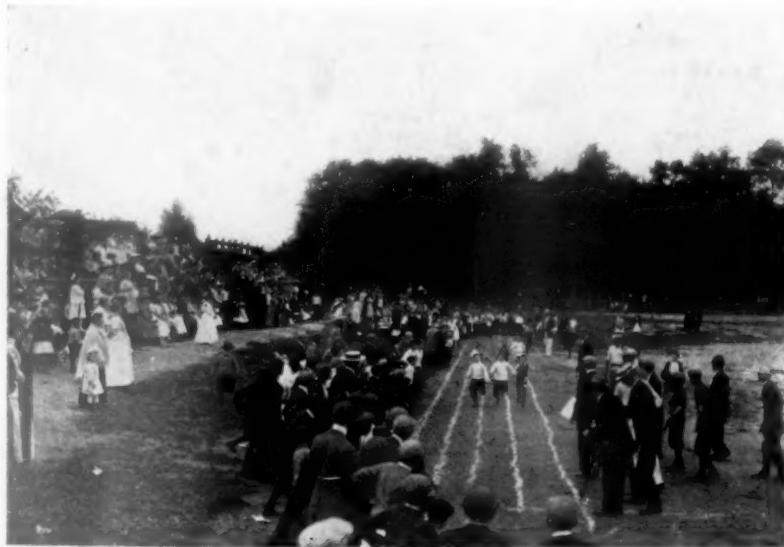
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NOVEMBER, 1913

The Playground

Playground Equipment



Auburn, N. Y.

WITH MIGHT AND MAIN

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The Playground

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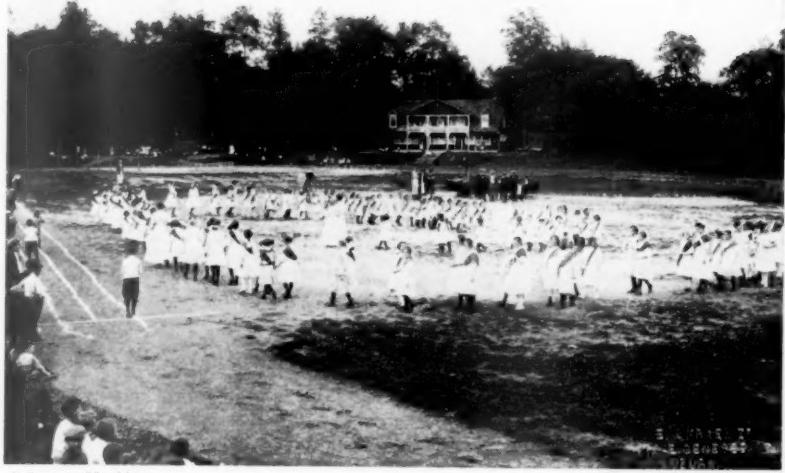
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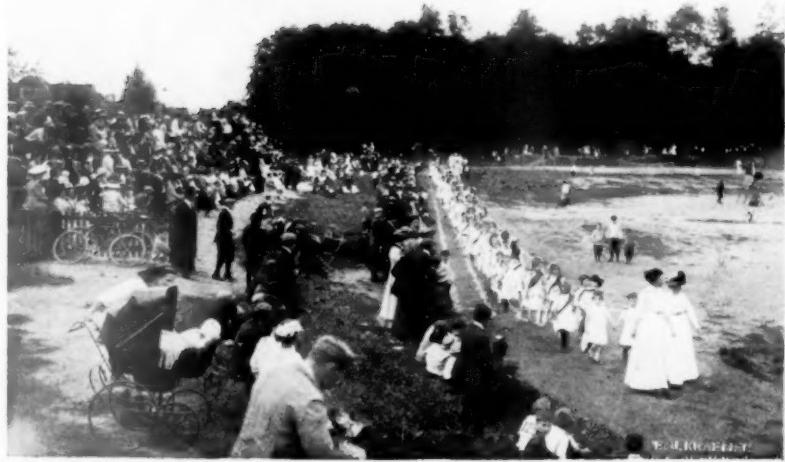
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Hiram House, Cleveland, O.

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT*

HENRY S. CURTIS, Ph.D.

Olivet, Michigan

To the superficial observer the apparatus seems to constitute the playground, but to the thoughtful it is coming more and more to be regarded rather as a sort of advertisement of its presence than as an essential part of it. For the prime need of all children is play, and the prime purpose of every playground should be to furnish play. One of the chief values of play probably is that it represents the old racial activities through which our progenitors climbed to civilization and modern industries. It is nature's method whereby the child may live through the childhood of the race and develop the motor co-ordinations and skill, the emotions, the judgment and the will in the same way that the race has done.

The same things cannot be said of play with apparatus. In the larger sense it is not play at all. In its newer forms at least it has no associations with the past. It is mostly a sort of mild diversion. It is nearly all for individual use and tends to break up the common spirit of the playground. We need very much to have careful studies made of the physical, social, emotional and intellectual value of the different pieces of apparatus. We should know also which pieces and types are most popular, the chief dangers involved in their use and the best ways of construction. It must be remembered that play was at first looked upon as amusement for children, and that it is only lately that it has been perceived as the fundamental thing in education. If playground apparatus is to be also pedagogical apparatus, it is quite evident that it should not be selected at random without any clear perception of the training given or the suitability of the equipment to the need.

Questions
to Be Asked

What should be a standard equipment? What apparatus, if any, is essential to a playground and what apparatus is only a decoration or an advertisement? What apparatus gives a definite training and what pieces are to be reckoned only as a diversion or as a mental dissipation? Psychologically the use and effect of some pieces of apparatus is very similar to getting

* Extracts from a chapter of a forthcoming book. All rights reserved.

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drunk. Generally also this is the most expensive and elaborate of all the equipment. Probably at least half of the million dollars or so that is spent each year in playground equipment is wasted or worse than wasted on unsuitable or unnecessary apparatus.

We shall here use equipment to describe the larger items such as fences, swimming-pools and field houses, while we shall use apparatus to describe the smaller things such as swings.

The Fence There has been a considerable division of opinion as to whether or not the playground

should be fenced. I am not aware, however, that any argument has been advanced against the fencing, except on the ground of the economy of space and the economy of money that is secured by not fencing and also the analogy from the park where the present usage is against it. These arguments do not seem very convincing. If the playground is not fenced, the children do play on the sidewalk, and in the street, but it was largely to avoid this that playgrounds were first created. The park analogy is not at all convincing, because the two have different uses. On the other hand, the reasons for fencing are very definite and to me entirely convincing. They may be divided into three kinds of reasons. The first is the protection of the children and the apparatus, the second is discipline, and the third is the spirit of the work, the mob psychology if you will, of the fenced and unfenced ground.

Dangers of an Unfenced Playground A playground usually contains a good deal of apparatus that may be damaged by vandals. Where the playgrounds are

fenced, the gates can be closed at the proper hour, and everyone excluded from the playgrounds thereafter. Thus the fence serves to protect the apparatus and the neighborhood from annoyance at night. It also serves to protect the children in a number of ways. Children who are interested in a game are always likely to dash out into the street in front of an automobile or other vehicle and thus run into serious danger. Dogs from the street or runaway teams may dash up on the playground at any time, but more serious than this, many pieces of apparatus, especially swings, are dangerous unless there is something to prevent the children from running through where they are. If a playground is to have any landscaping and flowers most

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of these will be at the edge of the ground and these cannot be protected without a fence.

Fencing Emphasizes the Individuality of the Playground

If a playground is unfenced it is like a vacant lot to the child. It has no individuality; it is scarcely a thing by itself. In all of our conduct we are subject to the constant suggestion of the place. We should not use quite the same language, perhaps, in the church that we should in the hotel; in the school, as in the barn. On the vacant lot you can do as you please, any kind of language or conduct is appropriate. When you have a fenced playground it becomes an institution, and your language and conduct correspond with your conception of it. The only punishment that can well be inflicted on the playground is exclusion, and it is difficult to exclude and enforce the exclusion of a boy from an unfenced playground. However, the most important reason of all, as I have said, lies in the mob psychology of the place. If it is fenced, it becomes a place by itself, a unity, a real institution. Its spirit, whatever it may be, is retained and concentrated as by an outer epidermis. It is possible to cultivate all the loyalties and friendships that play should develop where the playground is fenced.

**Playground
Divisions** It is generally agreed also that the playground should not only be fenced as a whole, but that the girls should be separated from the boys and the big children from the little children. In the Chicago playgrounds there is one section for children under ten, another for the older boys and a third for the older girls. I doubt if the correct division according to ages has been made in Chicago, but whether the fences are there or not some similar division of the children has to be maintained for the sake of efficient conduct of the grounds.

The boys wish to play different games from the girls and by themselves. The little girls and little boys play much the same games. If they are in the playground with the larger children and there is no way to separate them from the others, they are constantly getting in the way and being run over. The older boys wish to play different games from the girls. They should naturally have a man physical director over them. The girls play different games from the boys or at any rate play them in a different way. The older girls do not like to play

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games when the boys are around and they have the folk dancing, the sewing, raffia, which the boys do not usually care for. They should normally be under a woman physical director. The little children again have their own specific games and stories and industrial work and should have a kindergarten teacher.

All of these reasons indicate that there should in actual fact be three different sections and three different play leaders for the playground.

Now, it must not be inferred from this that I believe that the girls and boys should never play together. There is no danger from boys and girls playing together. It is the loafing together that is dangerous. It may be a very good thing for the boys' baseball team or volley ball team to play the girls' occasionally. It is often wise to have exhibitions and the like which will be attended both by girls and boys. I do not think any evil results are likely to come from such contests, and they are sure to lead to greater excellence and a wholesome stimulus to both.

An Attractive Fence There are three good kinds of fences which can be erected at a price that is not prohibitive. They are the steel picket fence, usually with steel posts set in concrete, which is the fence used around the Chicago playgrounds. Then there is the evergreen hedge of privet or box or cedar, which is cheaper and handsomer and harder to climb, and gives a certain seclusion to the playground as well. However, the hedge will take some little time to grow and will have to be protected with a low wire fence in the beginning. To my mind the woven wire fence that is covered with honeysuckle, flowering vines or rambler roses is at once the cheapest and the prettiest and the most satisfactory fence that can be made.

The Sand Bin Probably there should be a sand bin in every playground, as this is one of the most universal forms of play, loved by all children alike. Still it is not exactly a communal type of play such as the playground is supposed to represent. The child does not much care for companions when he is playing in the sand, certainly not for many companions. He plays almost entirely by himself. Children will sometimes combine in building a sand heap, but most of the things they mould by themselves, and a single child is nearly as content as though he had a dozen others with him. As the

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children grow older and use the sand more as a means of expression in drawing and moulding definite objects, a number of children may work in co-operation, but the small children do this very little. The sand bin belongs properly in the back yard where the children can play by themselves. Nevertheless, the playground is not being furnished in the back yard, in most cases, and the city ground must furnish it if the children are to have it.

Appeal of the Sand

It is difficult to understand the appeal which sand has for children, but there is no doubt about the fact. The sand is probably a greater attraction to the little children at the seashore than is the bathing, in most cases, and there are a great many children at the seashore who positively dislike the water. Wherever a house is being built in the city and a heap of sand is deposited, it will be found that the children are there digging away industriously and quite unconscious of the passerby. As Joseph Lee says, "Sand seems to have been made for the human hand." It is so plastic and obedient to the will of the planner. It furnishes great opportunities for drawing and moulding, yet the child's love for the sand is undoubtedly older than any intellectual interest. Its appeal is to the emotions, and to nerve cells, associated with a very distant racial history, so far back that their intellectual content is lost and only their emotional content remains. Perhaps the brain is always less emotional and has that much less energy at its command, if the child has not roused these particular cells to action through his sand activities. The love of the sand may even hark back to the amphibious days of the saurians, when the first progenitors of man crawled out of the sea to bask on the sea-beaches of a pristine world. However, that may be, or from whatever source, the love of the sand is there and nearly or quite universal among children.

Sand at the Seashore Ideal

Nature furnishes the sand at the seashore. There is a decided pleasure which comes from the contrast of the cold waters and the warm sand. The sea keeps its beach constantly sterile and disinfected. The ideal place to dig in the sand is at the water side. It is difficult to meet this requirement in the city playground, but not at all impossible. Some of the swimming pools of the South Park System have a sand beach around them made

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of several carloads of imported sand. Nearly all of the wading pools in Chicago have immense sand bins not far away. It would have been quite as easy to have made the sand courts the real beach of the wading pool, but doubtless in that case the sand would constantly be getting into the pool.

Shade the Sand Bin In the great majority of playgrounds, however, there are neither wading pools nor swimming pools, and the sand bin cannot be so located. It is almost absolutely essential that the sand bin should have both shade and sun because, if there is no shade, the sand gets so hot and dry that the children do not care to play in it, and, if there is no sun, it soon becomes unsanitary. In all of the first school playgrounds in New York the sand bins were installed in the basements of the schools. It was a delight to go in at first and see two or even three hundred children digging away there. They were usually quite unconscious and utterly absorbed in their work, but after two weeks had gone by and the children had come in from the streets with their feet covered with the gutter slime and had dropped in the bin their bread crusts and melon rinds, the sand bin was not so delightful. One could smell it as soon as one came inside the playground.

In the municipal playgrounds of New York frame pavilions with permanent roofs were erected. These were better than the ones indoors, because the sand did at least come in contact with the outdoor air. They were nevertheless very unsatisfactory, as they did not sufficiently expose the sand to the sun and the rain. In Chicago and in many other places, a tarpaulin of some kind is erected over the sand bin. This gives a certain amount of shade, though it is never very cool shade, and can be rolled up in cool and rainy weather, so that the sand may have the benefit of the sun and the rain. However, a tarpaulin is rather costly. The children are apt to climb on it and tear it and it may be torn by the wind unless it is very securely fastened. In some cases the sand bin can be put on the north side of a school or other building in such a way as to furnish the needed shade and give the sand the sunshine mornings and evenings, but on the whole the most satisfactory placing of a sand bin is under a tree. It will there get the sun when it is low and not too hot and be protected during the middle of the day.

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Under or around a Tree

The shade of a tree is much cooler than the shade of canvas, and the tree does not exclude rain. A sand bin may be built either under or around a tree. A second good cover for a sand bin is an arbor with some sort of vine over it. This has the great advantage that the arbor or framework can be cheaply erected and the vine will grow in a few months if the right one is selected, and it can be protected until it gets a start. Kudsu is probably the most rapidly growing vine that is available, though Virginia creeper also grows very rapidly, and is hardy nearly everywhere. It looks so much like poison ivy that the children will refrain from handling or breaking it.

The Construction of the Bin

Of course the size of the sand bin should be determined by the number of children who are likely to use it. In general a bin about twelve feet by twenty will be about right for most playgrounds. This bin may be made either of cement or of planks. If the bin is made of cement and has a cement bottom, it should have some outlet so it will not fill up with water after rains. It is better, however, for the sand bin not to have a bottom if the ground underneath is hard and will not mix in too much, because this keeps the sand in contact with the moisture below. For the same reason it is better to excavate the earth and put the sand bin nearly level with the surrounding surface, as the sand will not dry out as fast as it will if the bin is on the top of the ground. The sides may be made of bricks or planks. If the bin is made on top of the ground the cement bin has no great advantage over the one made of ordinary planks about twelve inches in height. There should be a plank or board running around the top, so that this can be used for moulding the sand and for a seat. The sand bin should be painted about the color of the surrounding surface, green for grass, brown for earth. Its cost is trifling. If the bin be installed along with many other things that are of cement, harmony will require that the bin also shall be of cement.

The Sand

In cities that are accessible to the sea or lake shore it should always be the practice to secure the pure white sand that is found there. This sand is very fine, pleasant to mould, and it does not soil the clothing.

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There is similar sand in many river beds and in some sand banks, but almost any plastering sand will do.

Keeping the Sand Clean This is a considerable problem. So much of a problem that I never feel entirely sure that the sand bin should not be purely a family affair for the children in the back yard. The sources of defilement are many. In many quarters the wind bears large quantities of dust which settles down on everything. This is soon blown off from most things, but is held by the sand. This dust in the city is largely horse manure; even if it is only pulverized clay, it will make mud when it is rained upon. In many places the sand is sure to get full of fleas. If the playground is unfenced, the sand bin is apt, in certain quarters, to be a place of carousal at night. But the greatest source of defilement is the children themselves. They come barefooted with all sorts of filth on their feet. They bring in bits of luncheon and drop it in the sand. It is impossible to prevent this defilement. The only thing that can be done is to change the sand frequently.

Changing the Sand In Germany they are accustomed to change the sand about once a week, and many of the sand bins are mounted on low tables, so that the children stand up around them. This certainly must be a great help in keeping the sand clean and fit to use. In the majority of the playgrounds of this country the sand is not changed at all. In others it is changed only once a season. The sand usually drifts out of the sand bin out on the playground, more or less, and has to be replenished about once a season unless the bin is very large and deep. This old sand can usually be used to advantage in filling in the jumping pit, and under the apparatus, so there is no considerable loss in replacing it. In a great many playgrounds the sand that works out from the bin greatly improves the surface of the surrounding playground.

Shall Utensils for Sand Play Be Furnished? As to furnishing utensils for playing in the sand, there is a difference of usage. Some furnish the pails and shovels, and some do not. The child at the seashore is nearly always armed with a bucket and shovel. The children mould the sand in the pail for many initial attempts at building. The only trouble with furnishing this equipment is that where the director has many other duties, it is hard to keep track of, and the little children

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have very little conception of property rights. Consequently they are very likely to walk off with the implements furnished. The cost of these things is trifling, and they can easily be replaced, but it is not well to teach the children to steal. Perhaps the children are too young to be injured in this way, however, and if the fact that these things are not to be taken away is impressed upon the older children, they will largely prevent the younger children from carrying them home.

In some places they furnish clam shells instead of shovels, so there is not so much temptation. Of course these utensils need to be collected and put away every night in any case. This means some trouble. Where there is a section for the little children, with a kindergartener in charge, there should be no trouble about the children's stealing the equipment and the care should not be excessive. In any ground it might be well to make the experiment, impressing upon the children at the beginning that the shovels and pails are not to be taken home. In some of the European sand bins, they furnish a quantity of round pebbles, with which the children outline their drawings.

Sprinkling the Sand The sand that is in the sun a part of the time each day, unless there are frequent rains, will soon get so dry that the children cannot do anything with it. It should be wet down almost every evening by the janitor after the children leave for the night.

Good Times in the Sand Bin Children of different ages use the sand for different purposes. The little children love to dig and pile up the sand merely for the sake of doing it. They find pleasure in the feeling of the sand on their hands. They like to see it grow into different forms and feel themselves the cause of the change. As they grow older, the sand play takes on more and more of the artistic and expressive nature. Anyone who has been at Atlantic City has found, I am sure, the activities of the sand artists along the Board Walk one of the most interesting sights of that great seaside resort. There are angels and horses and knights and castles, moulded in the sand with the touch of an artist, and not a few nickels and dimes are thrown to the workers every day by the appreciative on-lookers. Sand is excellent material to draw in.

In the *Century Magazine*, some fifteen years ago, G. Stanley

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Hall told the story of a sand pile in a rural village of Massachusetts. The boys who were the participants in this case were about twelve years of age and came to the village each summer for their summer vacation. They made in the sand pile a complete model of the village with its streets, schools, public buildings and other points of interest. This is a form of expression that is quite as educative as the sand and papier-maché maps that are made in the schools. The sand bin is very often used for the story period, and the children are invited to illustrate the story in the sand bin afterwards.

At What Age Do They Like the Sand Bin? Children will use a sand bin with pleasure from the time they are one year old until they are twelve or thirteen, but the bin is always placed in the yard of the little children, and is used primarily by them. The sand gardens of Boston were the first supervised playgrounds in this country, and the sand bin has been called the "Mother of the Playground."

The Slide The slide is not like the sand a natural and universal form of child play, inasmuch as a special piece of equipment is required for it, but the interest which the slide has come to satisfy is racially old. Otters and muskrats and elephants and I know not what other animals have slides of their own. It will be found in all of our cities that, wherever there is a smooth incline that is accessible, it is kept well polished by the children, whether it be a stone coping to a terrace or the banister of the house. Our modern slide is merely an invention to better satisfy an old love.

The Home-made Slide All that is needed strictly for a slide is some smooth, vertical or inclined piece of wood or metal down which one can slip. In the early days, these slides were usually made by supporting planks in an inclined position and having a ladder by which to climb to the upper end. These planks served very well, if they were free from slivers, but most of them were made out of pine and after rains the grain was apt to rise and then there was great danger that the children who were coming down might be impaled. Similarly upon our early wooden gymnasia there were inclined sliding poles of pine or cedar, which were subject to the same criticism. The next advance came when we began to make our slides of oak or maple. New York has a number of these slides

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with a covered passageway going up and coming down. They are about three feet wide so that two or three children can come down at once. On the whole, however, a slide can be purchased so cheaply now that it is scarcely worth while to make them any more.

The Maple Slide A maple slide in three sizes can be purchased and a small kindergarten slide is sold for \$15.00. The ordinary playground slide fifteen and one-half feet long and about eight feet high is sold for \$30.00, F. O. B. Chicago. This is an admirable slide. The slide board can be turned over, so that it may not get wet during rains or it may be detached and taken in if that is desired. This slide does not splinter. It is quite as smooth as a metal slide. It does not get so hot in summer nor so cold in winter and it does not get rusty. In very dry climates, however, it will warp or crack and cannot well be used. The maple slide should be waxed occasionally.

The Steel Playground Slide The steel slide is much more expensive than the maple slide and thus far it has not proved altogether satisfactory. As soon as it is scratched by nails in the heels of the children's shoes it is apt to rust. A rusty slide cannot well be used until it is polished again. There seems to be improvement in the new slides that are being put out and perhaps we may sometime have a slide that is actually rustless. However, thus far it seems to me the evidence is rather with the cheap maple slide.

The Steel Gymnasium Slide These are of more recent origin. They are attached to the top of the gymnasium frame, are about thirty feet long and cost \$120.00. They are used by the older boys and girls and by the young men and women. A slide similar to this is often used at the seashore for the bathers to slide down in their bathing suits into the water. A circular slide reaching to the second or third story is used on many schoolhouses of the older type for a fire-escape. It is a very rapid method of escape and more fun than the fire.

The Sliding Pole Sliding poles are used in most gymnasiums as a means of passing from the second story to the first. These poles are put on the end of the gymnasium frame and are generally enjoyed. They are steeper and not so long as the gymnasium slide. I once knew a boy to slide

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down one of these poles so rapidly as to break his leg, but I do not suppose this has often taken place.

The Use of the Slide The slide for the most part is intended for the little children. Until recently it has been used almost entirely by them. People seem to have an idea, in general, that the slide was invented by the clothing merchants to wear out the children's clothes. I doubt, however, if it does much damage in this way. The slide is very smooth and the child is not long in coming down. The child wriggles around in his seat a good share of the time anyway, and the seat is not so smooth as the slide. It is also commonly supposed that the slide is dangerous to little children, because it is some eight feet or more high. I doubt this conclusion also. Experience has not demonstrated the danger. There is a small slide in the yard of one of our neighbors which a half dozen small children use constantly. The eldest child in the group is only five and one is only two. The two-year-old will go down on his back head first and every other way. There has never been a child hurt to my knowledge in the year it has been there.

In our experience in Washington where we had a slide in every playground, I never knew a child to be injured seriously on one. There may be some question again if the slide does not belong to the private house instead of the playground. The smaller slides are not beyond private means. It is purely individual pleasure which the child will enjoy as much with one or two companions as he will with a whole playground full of people. Sliding is a universal love of children. All rapid and effortless motion except falling is associated with pleasure in the consciousness of the race apparently. We must suppose that the brain gets a certain sort of stimulus from it which is valuable, and that perhaps it wakes to action certain brain cells that would otherwise have lain dormant all of our lives.

Tobogganing and Skiing There is little of either of these sports in the playground, but they seem to be naturally associated with the slide as a form of sport. Toboggan slides are put up each winter in certain of the South Park Playgrounds of Chicago, and the children slide down from this artificial hill to the artificial lake that has been made for skating. Sliding with sleds is permitted on certain streets in a number

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of northern cities and the sport is always well liked by the children though it is apt to be dangerous. Policemen are stationed at cross streets in some places to stop teams and pedestrians who might cause collisions.

The See-Saw The see-saw is a piece of apparatus that children have always made for themselves by placing a board across or through the fence. The see-saw is one of the most dangerous pieces of apparatus. Children are naturally reckless and will often stand up on each end of the see-saw, and very soon one of the children is apt to be thrown off on his head. It is great sport to slip off the end when you are down and let your companion come down with a bang, perhaps to break a leg. Then you can stand on the middle of the see-saw and work it all yourself until you fall off—which is likely to be speedily. If the commercial see-saws with handles are used and the children can always be required to sit down there will not be so many accidents. The short see-saw on the high standard is the one that is most dangerous, as it makes a more acute angle with the ground, or in other words the incline while it is in the air is greater. The longer the see-saw board and the lower the standard the safer it is, but also, for the most part, the tamer it is also. As I have said, I do not regard the see-saw as worth while, but if it is used it is best to use one with a handle on a standard that is not much more than two and a half feet high. The see-saw is easily made, but most home-made ones are unsatisfactory.

The rocking boat or "merry widow" is a piece of apparatus somewhat similar to the see-saw in action. It is, however, a much more expensive and less common piece of apparatus. It is undoubtedly rather more valuable.

The Merry-go-round The merry-go-round is a piece of apparatus much in favor with park superintendents oftentimes. There is no other piece of apparatus that can be used constantly by so large a number of children. It is a sort of a circular grandstand on which the children sit in two tiers, while others run them round by the arms at the side. One of these merry-go-rounds will often be found to be used almost continuously by twenty to forty children. Several years ago, while I was supervisor of the playgrounds of Washington, we were presented with a very fine one which cost four hundred

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dollars. It was set on ball bearings and ran around very easily. We placed it in a play park not far from one of the public schools. In a few days a delegation of teachers came down to see us. They said the children went over and rode on the merry-go-round at noon and where so seasick all the afternoon that they could not study and that children had often vomited in consequence.

We moved it to another playground and a few days later a delegation of parents came down with the same complaint. In the merry-go-round I am unable to see that anyone gets any benefit except the child who pushes it around, and he might as well saw wood. If the apparatus runs very easily, some of the children are sure to become dizzy, and even if they do not show any bad signs, nearly all are probably affected more or less. I feel somewhat dizzy and upset for an hour after riding on one of the things myself. The apparatus is very costly, and I am inclined to think it is a positive injury to the children, and that it should be excluded from all playgrounds.

There is also a merry-go-round which runs around on small wheels on an iron track. This the children operate themselves by a lever arrangement, which gives a motion and exercise, much the same as rowing. This piece of apparatus is certainly good exercise, and I suspect that the working of the lever largely overcomes the tendency to dizziness, but of this I am not sure.

The Wading Pool

Wading is a sport which children have always indulged in without any special encouragement wherever there was an opportunity. The sensations of the feet were once very useful to our primitive ancestors in finding their way through the forest, in keeping paths and avoiding noise when stealing upon game or away from a pursuer. Most of our present feet sensations are corns and chilblains which have no great economic value. Still the old conditions live in our nervous systems and feet sensations. They have an emotional appeal which is hard to understand.

I can remember yet those days, when we went barefooted for the first time each spring. We often went out on the sunny side of the house, where the grass was warm, before the snow had entirely gone from the north side of the house. The day when we might first go barefooted for the whole day was like

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the Fourth of July, a day which left such vivid impressions that memory has still retained them. No less vividly stands out the memory of the days at the seashore or along the creek when one could walk about in the warm sand or in the mud and water.

These sensations seem to mean nothing to the intellect. It is hard to understand the sense of well-being that accompanies them. It is something of that sort of feeling that an alligator has, I suppose, when he is sunning himself on a warm sand bar in the river.

My first experience with a wading pool was during my first summer in the New York Playgrounds back in 1898. It was in the yard of one of the great public schools. The yard was of concrete and there was a drain in the center. There was a sand bin at one end. At that time we furnished the children with small wheelbarrows and shovels. There were three yards and two directors with about a thousand children to look after. Very naturally one of the most delightful kinds of busy work for the small children was to fill these wheelbarrows with sand and dump it down the drain.

One day we had a hard rain and the drain went on a strike with the result that we soon had nearly a foot of water in the yard. The rain continued to fall in torrents, and the directors tried to keep their charges under cover, but it was no small task. The children liked the flooded yard much better than the dry one and despite the rain had their shoes and stockings off in a jiffy and were out in the water. The directors would go around on one side and forbid the children to go out in the rain, but they would throng in from the other sides, meanwhile, until the directors had to give it up as a bad job and let the children have their way about it. It has never been necessary since that time to convince me that a wading pool would be popular.

The Cement Pool

In the Chicago playgrounds, the wading pools are cemented in all of the later pools at least. They are of different sizes, but will probably average fifty or sixty feet across. The water is oftentimes supplied by a fountain arrangement in the center from which the water also drains away when the pool is to be emptied. The common practice now is to make a circular pool about forty or fifty

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feet across with the water about three or four inches deep at the edge and fifteen or sixteen inches deep in the center. This leaves the larger area to the shallow water and this is what is usually desired. The two chief costs of the wading pool are the cementing and the connection with the sewer, though there may be a charge for the water also. A circular pool forty feet across should not cost over four or five hundred dollars and might cost much less.

**The Pool with a
Mud or Sand
Bottom**

Where a pool is made with a mud or sand bottom and the water is allowed to filter away through the soil or evaporate in the air, practically the only cost is the cost of the excavation and the expense of supplying the water. Such pools are often supplied by park superintendents and are as well or better liked by the children than the other pools.

**Changing the
Water**

The water is not changed frequently in most wading pools. It is not necessary that it should be changed so frequently as in the swimming pools. However, dust and soot settles on the water, and various kinds of litter gets into it, so it is well to change the water occasionally and clean up the pools. They are scrubbed down once a week in Chicago.

**Advantages of the
Mud and Cement
Pools**

The cement pool is much more attractive to look at and it has the advantage that the water can be let out and the pool can be cleaned whenever it is desired, but it is doubtful if it is ever as well liked by the children, or if its advantages are really considerable. It is always pleasanter to put your bare feet down in the sand or the mud than it is on cement. It is most pleasant of all where you can squeeze the mud up between your toes.

As the chief value of the wading pool is in arousing old racial memories and creating an emotional state, it seems to follow that the nearer the wading pool is to a state of nature, such as our amphibian ancestors enjoyed the more valuable it will be in arousing the proper emotional state in the child; so, if the sanitary inspector has nothing to say to the contrary, I shall vote for the pool with a bottom of sand or even of a mild variety of mud. We must remember of course that there is dirty dirt and clean dirt and there is nothing unsanitary from

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coming in contact with the soil. The wading pool in any case should be so that it can be drained off occasionally.

Bathing Booths The children in the wading pools are apt to get their clothes wet more or less and to splash each other. Ofttimes the small children want to lie down or sit down in it when the water is warm. For this reason bathing booths are furnished in some places, so that the children can put on old clothes before going in.

On the whole I am inclined to doubt if the modern wading pool is equal to the old time mud puddle for pleasure or profit. I do not think country children need wading pools, but they are well worth while to the benighted city youngsters who are denied so many of the wholesome sources of recreation that the country affords.

The Swing The swing is usually the central feature in the playground for small children. It is the piece of apparatus which usually attracts the most attention. In the minds of many people, a city playground means a row of swings. Yet the swing is one of the most expensive, dangerous and troublesome pieces of apparatus ever erected. It causes nearly all the criticism that is made of playgrounds, is responsible for most of the accidents, and yields in return a mild emotional stimulus of no apparent value, and a small amount of physical exercise. What has the swing to say for itself?

Why Do We Like to Swing ? Joseph Lee says it is a reminiscence of our tree top home. Very likely it is. All things that are spontaneously and universally pleasurable must have secured this association with pleasure in periods far back in history. Certainly monkeys all like to swing and it is through their skill in leaping from swaying branch to swaying branch or by swinging from vines or each other's tails according to accounts that they bridge the gap from tree to tree and are able thus to traverse the highways of the forest. Children like about equally well to swing from a single hanging rope as from a regular swing with a seat, as all gymnasium experience must testify.

I have no knowledge of the age of our present swing with two ropes and a board, but it seems to belong to the race. Pretty much everywhere it is to be found suspended from the limb of some convenient tree, and it seems to be the natural

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corollary of childhood everywhere. The sensation of swinging is of almost effortless motion, of a mild and gentle breeze, of falling without danger. These constitute the sensations, but can scarcely explain the universal pleasure in the swing.

Lee says that "swinging is like foreign travel" but he fails to explain the resemblance. He thinks his children do not need to swing, because of their varied experiences. I suspect, however, that there is a specific stimulation of the brain cells that only the swing can give, and that the child who has not had this emotional arousal may be the poorer intellectually all the rest of his life.

The Lawn Swing The lawn swing is scarcely a swing at all in its effect on the person. I doubt if it is psychologically a swing. It produces very different sensations. It is a very mild and diluted form of pleasure fitted for the recreation of grown folks, but scarcely worthy of any young lady or gentleman of mettle. The lawn, garden, or skup swing in its ordinary form will not stand the strain of the playground. Two were installed in each playground the first year in New York. They were nearly all broken during the first week. It was hard to prevent six or eight children from getting into each of them at the same time, and they could not stand the strain. There is a large swing of heavy timbers, which is used in the Chicago playgrounds. This is a serviceable playground swing, but it is expensive as compared with the other swings. Its chief value is as a seat when you are tired, a seat also that creates its own breeze. This is well adapted to playground use, and it is a good thing to have a few of these at the side of the strenuous play fields, so that they may take the place of benches.

The Hammock The hammock itself is a form of swing that comes the nearest of all perhaps to the original tree top. The orang-outang builds his own hammock in the tree top, and weaves the couch in which to die when shot. The hammock is found only in the infant department of the playgrounds, where baby hammocks are sometimes furnished for the little children. A number of these were installed in Seward Park the first year, but it was soon discovered that the mothers would come over, put their babies in the hammocks,

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and go off and leave them for an hour or more at a time, with the result that directors soon had a day nursery on their hands.

The Chair Swing The chair swing is much liked by the children from three to six years of age. In any place where they are provided, they will generally be found to be full, but the older children are apt to crowd into them and break them, or they are broken in putting them up and taking them down. These swings are good for the little children, but they require considerable care, as the small children usually have to be put in and taken out. When a child gets into one of these comfortable chairs also, he likes to stay, and there are apt to be complaints if there are other children who wish to use them.

The Wooden Framework In the early days nearly all of the equipment was of wood. The present practice is to use steel almost altogether. This is in line with the general trend of progress in other things. A swing framework when there are two big boys or girls in each swing, and each couple is trying to swing as high as possible is subject to great strain, and steel is none too strong. It is possible to make the wooden framework as strong as it needs to be at the time, but it soon rots away on the top where the rain soaks into the timber and just at the surface of the ground or a little below. Consequently, it may be only a year or two before the timbers are unsafe, though this may not appear at all at the surface. However, if the swing frame is properly braced, it will not collapse even though the uprights are rotted off. At least it will not do so at once and without warning. This rotting of the part in the ground can be largely prevented by setting the post in concrete about three and a half feet which should also come at least half a foot above the surface of the ground. If this concrete is mixed with a small amount of oil, it will keep the water out and give stability to the framework at the same time. The posts may also be protected by creosoting the lower end of them or by dipping them in hot coal-tar. However, these latter two methods do not give the rigidity to the frame which is secured through concrete. Timbers four by six of Georgia pine are the ones generally used. The cross beams at the top are another weak spot in the wooden frame. If it is flat at the top, the water soaks into it and rots it, especially at the places

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where the bolts go through. Sometimes this is prevented to a considerable extent by rounding off the top beam or by covering it with tin.

Perhaps the chief objection to the wooden framework, however, is that it is big and awkward. It does not seem as graceful and sightly as the steel frame. It should always be kept painted, if used, but in the long run it will not be found to be much cheaper than the steel frame and the steel is to be recommended unless the whole arrangement is temporary.

The Steel Framework

There is nothing difficult to understand about the steel framework. Ordinary gas pipe will serve perfectly well and it can be screwed together by almost any one. Three-inch medium pipe with three-and-a-half-inch horizontals should be used, or two-inch uprights and two-and-one-half-inch horizontals, if the extra heavy pipe is used. All pipe dimensions refer to interior measurements. This is amply strong for the low swings, if they are well braced, but it would be well to use a half-inch larger pipe for the higher swings to be used by the big children.

There is a general feeling that galvanized pipe should always be used, but there is no great choice between well-painted black pipe and the galvanized. In other things of course the iron workers who build bridges and towers, with the exception of windmill and electric light towers use the black iron, which is first painted red to protect it from rust and afterwards black. Galvanized pipe is pretty sure to rust where there is any wear. However, the fashion is certainly for the galvanized pipe.

In the ordinary gas pipe that is screwed together, the thread of the pipe cuts it about half in two and consequently reduces its strength by that much at the last thread. Spalding avoids this by using an unthreaded pipe and fastening the fitting with set screws. Medart uses an unthreaded pipe and fastens the fitting and the horizontal together with bolts. This requires two holes through the pipe and fitting and must weaken it considerably, but probably not so much as the thread.

The Height of the Swing Frame

Children like the tall swing. Of course the taller the swing the heavier the framework will have to be, and the better it will need to be braced. This is true both because of the greater leverage and momentum that is acquired by the high swing and because

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the tall swing will always attract the large children, while the low swing is apt to be left to the little children. The high swing is considerably more expensive. My own feeling is for the low swing, because it does not take so much room, is not so dangerous, does not cost so much money, and is not taken from the little children, who are its rightful possessors, by the big children who ought to be doing something else. The swings for the little children in most cases ought not to be more than eight or ten feet high.

It is well to put up a bent of twelve to eighteen swings in a section, as this is cheaper and they are more easily controlled than where they are put up in separate sections. The swings for the little children will require about three and a half feet for each swing. I should be inclined to limit the height of swings for the older children to twelve or fourteen feet also. These will require about four feet to a swing.

The Swing Fittings The ordinary T's and elbows for regular pipe can be obtained at any hardware store, but where all the apparatus is secured locally a special fitting to attach the braces to the pipe will probably have to be made. Special fittings may be purchased when the pipe is purchased, and the work is done locally. A special fitting holds the braces as well as connects the horizontal and vertical pipes. These fittings are expensive, but are now much cheaper than they were a few years ago. The strategic point is the collar about the pipe which holds the rope or chain. This is apt to slip and slide on the pipe. It has to bear the strain of the swinging, and it should be made so it will grip like a vice. The hook also that holds the chain or rope must be above reproach. If made of soft iron, this will wear through within less than a month in any much-used playground. It should be made of tempered steel that is both hard and tough. In some swings this friction is greatly reduced by having the swing work on ball bearings. I do not see any great advantage in having a swing run very easily, as the children tend to stay in too long anyway, and they do not get any exercise if the swing runs itself, but it is an advantage not to have the fittings wear out.

The Swing Rope or Chain There are three mediums used to suspend the swing seat from the frame. These are bars, ropes and chains. The bar is used very little in this

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country. In fact it is almost never used. It is heavy and awkward and inflexible, but it is common in England and Scotland. The bars are about an inch in diameter. The traditional method of supporting a swing everywhere is by a rope. I am inclined to doubt if we have yet discovered anything much better. The chief danger in the playgrounds is that the children may be struck with a swing. It is best to make the swing as light as possible, so as to reduce the momentum of the blow, though of course the chief momentum will come from the weight of the child or children who are in the swing. The rope swing with the board seat is the lightest swing there is made.

Most swings are hung with manilla rope. This is cheap, but it stretches out rapidly where it is exposed to the weather and may soon bring the board too near the ground or make one side lower than the other, so it hangs unevenly. The children overcome this by tying knots in the rope, but this gives the rope and swing an untidy appearance. If manilla rope is to be used it should be shrunk before it is used.

I understand that the cordage of sailing vessels is made of ropes of hemp and that these ropes do not stretch in the same way the manilla ropes do. If this is so, the hemp should always be used, even if it does cost more. The chief difficulty with rope is that it will rot if left out of doors for a long time in all weathers, and there are apt to be rowdies in the neighborhood who think it a good joke to come in at night and cut a swing rope partially through, so that it will break when exposed to strain. This has happened repeatedly in the early days in the parks, so that the park men who leave their swings out all the time in all weathers and under all conditions have come to use chains altogether. However, the swings in the South Park System are supported by ropes. The rope swing is especially suited to any system where, for any reason, the swings need to be taken down frequently, as is usually the case in unfenced playgrounds.

The Steel Chain

There is a large variety of steel chains that are being used, but the one that is coming to be generally chosen is the chain with links about one foot long, they are rather short bars which connect with the next bar in the chain. These bars flare in the middle and are about

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one-half inch in diameter. There are several very decided advantages which these swing chains have. They are of galvanized steel and do not rust much. They will stand the weather. They do not stretch. They cannot be cut and do not need to be taken in to protect them from the elements.

There are also disadvantages. The swing is too heavy, the link is not large enough to get a good grip on it and it is too hot in summer and too cold in winter for comfort. These objections would be largely overcome if a piece of rubber hose or some similar substance were put on the lower links. In a number of places especially in school yards, I have seen a slender steel chain, not unlike a dog chain, used. This chain is not strong enough or hard enough and soon breaks or wears through.

Taking in the Swings Where swings with ball bearings and steel links are used, the practice is to chain them with a short chain to the uprights. Where the rope swings are used, they are usually hung from hooks and taken in at night.

The Swing Board The swing board is the catapult that bowls over so many children, if it is improperly placed. It should be as light and soft as possible for this reason. I am inclined to think that a steel board is a mistake.

The swing board should be only a little longer than the width of the child. It is tiresome to have to hold your arms out horizontally at right angles to grasp the ropes as is necessary where a small child is seated on a swing board that is too long for him. There are three traditional methods of attaching the rope to the swing seat, one is to run the ropes through the board and tie knots in them, a second is to run the rope through the board and upon the other side to the limb of the tree, and the third is to cut a notch in the swing board and place this over the rope. None of these methods is satisfactory in the playground, because they are all more or less dangerous. The rope is likely to slip out of the notch, the knot to come untied, the rope to wear through where it is run under the board. The board also wobbles more or less with any of these attachments. The approved method is to have a clamp go around the board terminating with a stirrup strap and eyelet of steel in which the rope or chain is fastened.

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Height of the Swing from the Ground

The swings should be hung just high enough so the feet of the children will not touch. However, the children will be of different sizes, and, if the seat is hung high enough so the feet of none of the children will touch, it will be too high for the little people, and the best that can be done will be to compromise on a medium height. This will mean, however, in all probability as has been said that the feet of some of the children will touch, and, in consequence, that the earth will be dug out underneath in certain places. This is apt to fill with water after rains, and as the children swing back and forth, they splash themselves and others. To prevent this, a board or cement floor is often placed beneath the swings. This should be about three feet wide.

The Swing Space

The swings should always be at the side and in general the swing framework should be parallel with the fence and just far enough away so that the children will not strike the fence as they swing. In some places the swing space is roped or chained off from the balance of the playground, so that there may be no danger of a child's running in front of a swing without being aware of what he is doing.

Erecting the Swing Apparatus

If there is a skillful ironworker in the neighborhood, he can easily erect the framework for the swings. Any ingenious man who understands rope splicing can make the swings if ropes are used. This will greatly reduce the cost, but doubtless the project will not look quite so finished and may not be quite so safe, as though the equipment were purchased from one of the companies.

Apparatus may be ordered in various ways. What is often done is to let the contract for the installation of a complete playground outfit. This means that the company must not only furnish the equipment, but that they must send a gang of men perhaps from Massachusetts to Missouri in order to erect it. If they are told to put this equipment into the playground and are not definitely shown where it is to be placed, they will probably put it up in the center of the playground space where it will be most conspicuous and where an eighth of an acre of apparatus can easily ruin three acres of playground.

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Use of the Swings

Girls should not be allowed to stand up in swings unless they wear bloomers or they are in a yard entirely by themselves, so that outsiders can not see in. Ofttimes a new director thinks it a part of her duty to swing the children, but of course the only considerable advantage from the swing comes from swinging yourself. When you stand up and pump yourself up, a swing is a pretty complete gymnasium, exercising nearly every muscle in the body. It is excellent for the back muscles especially and for the heart and lungs.

In the beginning there are always many quarrels over the swings. A child gets into the swing and wants to stay there, but there are several other children who want to use it. This makes it seem all the more desirable to the one in possession and the situation is likely to become acute if there is no one to adjust matters. A very common method is for the director to appoint a monitor over the swings, who sees that each child has so long and no longer in the swing. This usually means that each child may have ten swings or five minutes or something of the kind. In some places the teacher rings a bell every five minutes, and everyone is required to change.

In some places I have seen fifteen or twenty children standing in line for a swing, and sometimes these children in line were playing catch or something of the kind to while the time away. However, this always indicates a very congested playground or a poorly conducted one, where there is little going on. The games and other activities are much more valuable than the swing, and the most successful playground is the one where the swings are empty and the games are full rather than vice versa. Full swings and no games is sure proof that the whole playground needs speeding up. The swing is a piece of nearly standard attractiveness against which the teacher has to compete in organizing the play. The teacher who can make the games more attractive than the swings is a success.

The Giant Stride

The giant stride comes nearest to the original hanging vine or monkey's tail to swing from. Yet in its modern form it is an invention that has grown out of the play movement and is a new form of sport. The giant stride consists of a tall pole, usually fourteen to eighteen feet in height. The modern ones are all made of

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steel pipe about five inches in diameter and set about four feet in concrete. The head is set on the top of the pipe with ball bearings, and attached to this revolving head are six ropes or chains with rope or steel ladders with three or four short rungs attached. The ladders are intended to hold on by. The child takes hold of the ladder and paces about the pole touching the ground every fifteen or twenty feet—hence the name. The giant stride is much appreciated by children more than ten years old.

In country sections a giant stride is often made by mounting a wagon or plow wheel on the top of a pole and attaching knotted ropes to the periphery of the wheel. The first forms of the giant stride everywhere, were made in some such way. The knotted rope serves very well to hold on to though it is not quite so satisfactory as the ladder. The rope ladder with the wooden rungs is more satisfactory than the steel while it lasts, because it is pleasanter to hold to, and because it does not hurt so much when you are hit by it as the steel ladder does. However, of course it is not so permanent and does not stand the weather so well.

Location of the Giant Stride

in a corner of the yard whenever possible so that it may be out of the way of the games. It is a very good piece to fill up an angle somewhere, where the space might otherwise be wasted. The children should be instructed in getting off the giant stride as they are sometimes hurt by dropping off and standing in their tracks until they are struck by the next child who is coming around. The child should always dodge out as soon as he drops off.

Locking up the Giant Stride

that the ladders can be taken off. In some the chains or ropes can be detached from the wheel above, but the common method is to chain the ropes to the post. This is not very satisfactory, as they will still slip around in spite of the chain.

The Teeter Ladder

Probably the piece of apparatus that has been most criticised in the playgrounds is

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the teeter ladder. It is as the name indicates a horizontal ladder balanced in the middle, and just high enough for the children to reach. They take hold of each end with their hands and go up and down much as they would on a see-saw. It is pretty good exercise and tends to pull the shoulders up where they belong. The main difficulty with the teeter ladder is during the time while the children are learning, but it is never free from criticism. The year the playgrounds were opened in New York, we sent out a questionnaire, asking if there were any piece of apparatus that they wished to dispense with. The teeter ladder got more votes than all the other apparatus put together.

There are three important reasons for care in its use, especially for children who are just making a beginning with it. The first of these is the method of getting off. The child who is down, whether from thoughtlessness or cussedness, lets go, allowing the child who is up to fall, and the ladder perhaps strikes him on the head or shoulders. This is apt to result in a sprained ankle and may mean a rather severe injury. The second trouble that I have found with them is that the children love to sit on them and use them like a see-saw. This is all very well if they are careful, but, if it is brought down sharply when a child is not watching, he may be thrown off on his head. What came very near being a fatal accident once happened in this way in one of our Washington playgrounds.

The third criticism is harder to guard against in a mixed playground. We used to make the rule that the girls who went on the teeter ladder must pin or put a rubber band around their dresses, but while the ones that you instructed might do as you said, other children might come in at any moment who had not heard your instructions and go at once upon the teeter ladder. Of course these difficulties will become less and less the longer playgrounds are open.

The Circular Running Track

The circular running track is a feature of most municipal playgrounds. Ofttimes it practically monopolizes the available space. In fact one cannot but be impressed by the very subordinate place which play is evidently supposed to take in many playground systems. The circular track is useful in long distance runs, such as do not take place in the playgrounds. It allows the young fellows to get exercise by themselves without any

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direction, for it does not take very much guidance to run around a circular track. In a playground system where athletics are systematically encouraged there is constant use of the straight-away track, but very little use for the circular track.

I am inclined to think that where a circular track is provided, it should be laid out around the ball diamond and that it should be made without a curb, so that one can play right over the space. I am not quite certain whether the circular track is worth while or not, but I am quite sure it is not worthy of the practical monopoly of the playground space which it often holds. It is expensive, space-consuming and relatively ineffective and idle as compared with the straight-away. Young children should not be encouraged to run long distances at speed, at least not until they have had much preliminary training, and the circular track is useful only in long distance running.

The Outdoor Gymnasium

Gymnasiums and playgrounds are not the same thing. It must be said, however, in its defence that the outdoor gymnasium is not a real gymnasium. It has no pulley weights, rowing machines, stall bars, dumb-bells, Indian clubs, wands and often has not the horse, the buck, nor parallel bars. It is mostly a monkey-house to climb about in. It contains a trapeze, parallel rings, a horizontal ladder, usually climbing ropes or poles, sliding poles or a slide, a horizontal bar and a set of traveling rings. The traveling rings, the slide and the horizontal bar are constantly in use, the other features little. The parallel rings are also used considerably, but mostly in the doing of "stunts" that are of doubtful advantage to the doer, because so many of them are likely to result in strains. Of all of these activities the only one that is really gymnastics is the use of the horizontal bar. The outdoor gymnasium is not used for any sort of class work or usually for any sort of teaching. Where the horse and the parallel bars are furnished, they are usually used a good deal, but are not a part of the framework which is usually termed the outdoor gymnasium. The horse and buck do not stand the playground conditions very well on account of the rain and snow and they are sometimes cut at nights by rowdies.

Most of the "stunts" done on an outdoor gymnasium involve a risk of falling, and there should be sand or tan bark

PROFESSOR HETHERINGTON

underneath so as to minimize this danger as much as possible. The earth should be excavated to a depth of about six inches, and the sand or bark filled in.

The outdoor gymnasium is one of the chief advertisements of the play system. It is costly, and looks imposing as it stands out in the open, but it looks much larger than its actual results can warrant.

A NEW POSITION FOR PROFESSOR CLARK W. HETHERINGTON

Prof. Clark W. Hetherington, who has been working under the Joseph Fels Endowment, has accepted the position of professor of physical education at the University of Wisconsin.

Prof. Hetherington besides serving as a member of the Board of Directors of the Playground and Recreation Association of America has been chairman of the Committee on Normal Course in Play, rendering the playground and recreation movement a very great service in assisting in the preparation of this report. After the report appeared, Prof. Hetherington, as chairman of the Committee, visited a great many normal schools and universities throughout the country, doing much to create a greater interest in the recreation movement.

During the last summer Prof. Hetherington has lectured in the summer session of the University of California. Besides giving the courses, "Introduction to Physical Education," and "Nature and Function of Play," he organized a Play School. This school ran during the six weeks of the summer session, with 207 children. On a single day the number of visitors ran as high as 200. A great many educators followed the school with interest and pronounced it a decided success. The University plans to conduct similar Play Schools during the next two summers.

In his work in the Play School, Prof. Hetherington was assisted by Mrs. Hetherington, Dr. Everett C. Beach, E. B. DeGroot and others.

In his new position at the University of Wisconsin Prof. Hetherington's time will be devoted entirely to the professional course, chiefly to the heavier theoretical course in physical education.



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PURPOSE OF THE PLAYGROUND AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

The people of our country interested in increasing the joy of living by providing adequate opportunity for play for all have banded themselves together in order that through their united efforts in The Playground and Recreation Association of America the playgrounds already established may give the largest measure of happiness to the children and may receive more adequate financial and moral support; that the hundreds of cities and towns not having playgrounds may establish them as early as possible and upon the right basis, that recreation centers may be provided for all—young people and older people—that the time shall come when every citizen shall have an opportunity for wholesome recreation, for joyous comradeship in his leisure hours.